length will increase marginally which will help to operate A-320 type of aircraft with reduced load penalty. Besides, Indian Airlines has introduced a new daily morning A-320 service on Delhi-Patna-Delhi route *w.e.f.* 4th August, 2004.

(c) Due to development constraints on the expansion of the existing Patna airport, there was a proposal under consideration to shift operations to Bihata airfield. The proposal has been kept in abeyance due to the project not being viable.

Pension to retired AI employees

2094. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR:
SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Air India employees, who had retired a decade ago, are yet to receive their pension;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) The Government had approved the Air India Employees' Self Contributory Superannuation Pension Scheme effective from 1st April, 1994, only for those employees who were in active service of the Company as on 1st April, 1994. The scheme was introduced in 1996 effective 1st April, 1994. Employees who have retired before 1st April 1994 are not entitled to receive pension.

Open Sky Pact between India and USA

2095. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Will the Minister of CIVILAVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and USA are working out open sky pact;

(b) if so, whether US Asstt. Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs had serious discussions with regard to adoption of an open sky agreement between USA and India;

(c) whether US carriers are very interested in India and looking at potential destination;

(d) whether this requires change of bilateral agreement that exists between the two countries governing air services; and

(e) if so, by when an agreement on open sky pact is likely to be signed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (e) US authorities have proposed signing of an open sky agreement with India. US Asstt. Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs recently called on Minister (Civil Aviation) in this regard. However, no decision has yet been taken on the proposal. Even under the existing Air Services Agreement between the two countries, which is a quasi open sky (Bermuda-I) type, each side can designate any number of airlines to operate any number of services on agreed routes.

Expansion of Mysore airport

2096. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state the present status of the proposed expansion/renovation of the existing Mysore Airport Project in Karnataka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): Airports Authority of India (AAI) has initiated action for development of runway of dimension 1700 x 150 metres alongwith associated infrastructure to sustain the operation of ATR-42 type of aircraft subject to the condition that the State Government of Karnataka provides the required land free of cost and free from all encumberances, free electricity and water, free security for the aerodrome for peripheral security as well as the anti-hijacking squad and exempts the aerodrome from property tax and municipality tax. A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been sent to State Government for acceptance in November 2003. Further action is likely to be taken after getting the State Government's response.

Expansion of low-cost airlines

2097. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the recent expansion of low-cost airlines offering cheaper travel that is affordable for Indian public;